

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 SAA-01 SES-02
SSM-03 NEAE-00 /079 W
-----109570 161933Z /15 21

O 160846Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4918
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
USMISSION USUN NY
USMISSION SINAI
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 10472

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - T E X T (T H R O U G H O U T)

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR PDEV IS XF
SUBJ: CABINET DEFERRAL OF SETTLEMENTS ISSUE MINIMIZES DAMAGE

REF.: TEL AVIV 10343

1. ALTHOUGH NO ONE HAS COME OUT OF THIS LATEST SETTLEMENTS
FLAP SMELLING VERY GOOD, THE AUGUST 14 CABINET DECISION
TO DEFER ANY ACTION ON THE FIVE PROPOSED NEW NAHALS UNTIL
AFTER CAMP DAVID HAS TEMPORARILY DEODORIZED EVERYONE
INVOLVED, MA'ARIV EDITORIALY
LIKENED THE REACTION OF MOST TO THE RELIEF FELT IN THE
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HOUSE AFTER THE GOAT HAS BEEN TAKEN OUT, BUT ASKS,
"WHY DID THE GOAT HAVE TO BE BROUGHT IN IN THE
FIRST PLACE?" BECAUSE EVERYONE HAD
SOMETHING TO GAIN FROM THE DEFERRAL, IT WAS ADOPTED
WITH VERY LITTLE DEBATE BY THE RUMP CABINET SESSION,
FROM WHICH BEGIN, SHARON AND WEIZMAN, AMONG OTHERS,
WERE ABSENT.

2. BEGIN AND DAYAN CLEARLY RECOGNIZED THAT FORMAL APPROVAL OF THE SETTLEMENTS BY THE CABINET BEFORE CAMP DAVID, OR EVEN A DIVISIVE INTERNAL DEBATE ON THE SUBJECT WITH ITS ATTENDENT INFLAMMATORY PUBLICITY, COULD HAVE HAD DIRE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE SUMMIT NEGOTIATIONS.

3. FOR YADIN, THE DECISION CAN BE PORTRAYED AS A MORAL VICTORY OF SORTS, DESPITE HIS LESS THAN IMPRESSIVE PERFORMANCE (REFTEL), AND YADIN'S SUPPORTERS WITHIN THE DMC ARE ALREADY CLAIMING THAT HIS ACTIONS IN BLOCKING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SETTLEMENTS HAVE PREVENTED THE COMMISSION OF A MAJOR BLUNDER THAT COULD HAVE UNDERMINED ISRAEL'S NEGOTIATING STANCE. DMC MINISTER OF LABOR KATZ. HIMSELF A RELATIVE DOVE WHO, IT HAS BEEN RUMORED, MIGHT BE PREPARED TO JOIN A DMC WALKOUT FROM THE GOVERNMENT, COMMENTED, "THIS IS ONE OF THOSE DAYS WHICH PROVE IT IS GOOD THAT THE DMC IS IN THE GOVERNMENT COALITION." THE DEFERRAL, COMBINED WITH YADIN'S PROBABLE INCLUSION ON THE CAMP DAVID DELEGATION, HAS SPARED YADIN FROM WHAT APPEARED LIKELY TO BE AN ALL-OUT ATTACK AT THE UPCOMING DMC COUNCIL MEETING, LED BY THE PARTY'S CHIEF DOVE, AMNON RUBINSTEIN, ON HIS INEPT AND DISINGENUOUS ROLE IN THE WHOLE AFFAIR.

4. FOR THE LABOR PARTY, THE DECISION BROUGHT A TEMPORARY
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REPRIEVE FROM THE AGONIZING AND DIVISIVE TASK OF FIGURING OUT HOW TO RATIONALIZE AN ATTACK ON A SETTLEMENT SCHEME WHICH CONFORMS TO THEIR OWN BASIC DESIGN - THE ALLON PLAN - AND TO WHICH THEIR AFFILIATED SETTLEMENT MOVEMENTS HAD ALREADY PROMISED THEIR COOPERATION.

5. SHARON'S SUPPORT FOR THE DECISION IS NOT SURPRISING, EITHER. HE NO DOUBT EXPECTS EVENTUAL CABINET APPROVAL ONCE THE SUMMIT TALKS HAVE PASSED. IN THE MEANTIME HE HAS BEEN SPARED THE PROSPECT OF ABSORBING THE BLAME FOR SOURING THE NEGOTIATING ATMOSPHERE, AN EFFECT HIS "GHOST SETTLEMENT" CAPER WAS WIDELY CREDITED WITH HAVING ON THE JERUSALEM POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEETINGS LAST JANUARY.

6. THE ONLY DISSENTING CABINET VOICE WAS THAT OF BEGIN'S CONFIDANT, MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO HAIM LANDAU, WHO OBJECTED TO LINKING ANY DECISION ON THE SETTLEMENTS ISSUE TO NEGOTIATIONS, LEST ANYONE DRAW THE CONCLUSION THAT ISRAEL WAS BOWING TO OUTSIDE PRESSURE. ON THE OTHER HAND, HOUSING MINISTER GIDEON PATT (LIBERAL PARTY) WHO RARELY SPEAKS UP ON FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES, ADVOCATED SUSPENDING DISCUSSION OF THIS SUBJECT UNTIL 1979 SO AS NOT TO APPEAR TO

BE USING THE THREAT OF NEW SETTLEMENTS AS A FORM OF PRESSURE
ON THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS.

7. OUTSIDE THE GOVERNMENT, MAINSTREAM REACTION WAS FAVORABLE
TO THE CABINET'S PRAGMATIC DECISION, ALTHOUGH PREDICTABLY
IT DREW FIRE FROM RIGHT AND LEFT. GUSH EMUNIM DECLARED
THAT BY DEFERRING THE ISSUE "THE GOVERNMENT HAS ITSELF
PROVIDED CONFIRMATION FOR THE ARGUMENT THAT SETTLEMENT IN
ERETZ YISRAEL IS AN OBSTACLE TO PEACE." "MAPAM DISMISSED
THE CABINET DECISION AS CHANGING NOTHING," "SINCE THE DAMAGE
HAS ALREADY BEEN DONE AND THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT LEARNED
FROM ITS PAST MISTAKES."

8. A THOROUGH-GOING DEBATE ON THE FUTURE OF ISRAELI SETTLE-
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MENT ACTIVITY ON THE WEST BANK HAS THUS BEEN STAGED OFF FOR
A WHILE LONGER. LABOR HAS ALWAYS OPPOSED SETTLEMENTS IN
DENSELY POPULATED SAMARIA, WHICH LIKUD HAS PROMOTED, AND WILL
CONTINUE TO DO SO. ALL THE MAJOR PARTIES, ON THE OTHER HAND,
ARE COMMITTED TO RETENTION OF MOST OF THE JORDAN VALLEY AND
ITS SETTLEMENTS IN ISRAELI HANDS. THEREFORE, THE GREAT DEBATE,
IF AND WHEN IT FINALLY COMES, WILL FOCUS, AT LEAST AS FAR AS
THE JORDAN VALLEY IS CONCERNED, NOT ON THE PROPRIETY OF ES-
TABLISHING SETTLEMENTS IN THE REGION, BUT RATHER ON THE DIP-
LOMATIC COSTS OF FURTHER EXPANSION OF SETTLEMENT ACTIVITIES.
THERE IS ALREADY BEGINNING TO BE HEARD, HOWEVER FAINTLY, THE
VIEW THAT THE TIME FOR UNRESTRICTED PROLIFERATION OF SETTLE-
MENTS IN THE WEST BANK MAY BE DRAWING TO A CLOSE AND THAT
LIMITS ON FUTURE EXPANSION MIGHT BE A NECESSARY AND, IN THE
FINAL ANALYSIS, ACCEPTABLE PRICE TO PAY FOR A FAR-REACHING
AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT. IT WAS SHARON HIMSELF WHO RECENTLY SAID,
IN URGING A STEPPED-UP DRIVE TO ESTABLISH WEST BANK
SETTLEMENTS, THAT ISRAEL IS APPROACHING THE END OF AN
ERA, AFTER WHICH IT WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE TO ESTABLISH NEW
SETTLEMENTS. LEWIS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CABINET, LAND SETTLEMENT, WEST BANK, POLICIES, COMMITTEES, MEETING PROCEEDINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TELAV10472
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780361-0519, D780335-0061
Format: TEL
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780856/aaaabuzg.tel
Line Count: 156
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 57e28662-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 TEL AVIV 10343
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1716798
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CABINET DEFERRAL OF SETTLEMENTS ISSUE MINIMIZES DAMAGE
TAGS: PBOR, PDEV, IS, XF
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/57e28662-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014